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ABSTRACT

The focal points of this study are the role perceptions and the environments of women's page editors from daily and weekly newspapers across the United States. In the role perception areas, equal rights, discrimination, and the role of women in journalism are examined. Salaries, education, college major and minor, and years in the profession are some of the demographic categories studied. Findings reveal that of the 335 women's page editors studied, 305 are women and 30, men. The women's salaries are significantly less than the men's. Sixty-five percent of the women earn $9,000 or less per year, while only 19 women, or 6 percent earn more than $15,000 each year. Eight-two percent of all respondents had some college or graduate school education. Forty-four percent of those editors who had attended college or graduate school took a journalism major or minor. More than 50 percent of the respondents had 10 years or less journalism experience, but the overall mean was 12.5 years. The women's page editors agree strongly that qualifications for a job should be the only considerations in employment. They feel that the prejudice against women on newspapers can be erased with some effort on the part of women's page editors. (Author/SW)

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Women's Page Editors: Self-Perceived Status

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WOMEN's PAGE EDITORS: SELF-PERCEIVED STATUS

I. INTRODUCTION

It has been 126 years since the Woman's Movement in America began at Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848. However, even with the current Equal Rights Amendment interest by many groups of women (and men), women's role in society is in a state of flux.[1]

Working women and women concerned with the status of their place in society seem to be searching for the place in it which men have traditionally enjoyed. During the past few years, with much encouragement by various writers, the women's movement has progressed to the point that state and federal governments have enacted legislation to assure women an equal place in all areas of life.

For example, Executive Order 11246 covers two aspects or concepts: non-discrimination and affirmative action. All federal agencies or institutions using federal funds, under this order, must eliminate all discriminatory treatment of present and potential employees. Their policies must not discriminate on the grounds of race, color, religion, sex or national origin.[2]

In the area of broadcast journalism, the Federal Communications Commission has issued an order adding women to their equal employment opportunity rule, which previously had been applicable to racial and ethnic minorities. This order prohibits discrimination against women in placement, pay, promotion, working conditions, layoff, demotion, recruitment, and termination.[3]

But what about the actual status of women in journalism? A study by Stone, Geisler and Dell of Wisconsin shows that a group of university faculty and students, grade school students, and small-town adults prefer women as broadcasters only in the area of White House social event coverage. In most other areas, the subjects preferred male reporters.

In the area of print journalism, particularly newspaper reporting and editing, not much is definitely known about the current status of the women involved. Aside from the basic constitutional protection provided all citizens, it is assumed by authors that many women in newspaper work today have not enjoyed the progress which other professional women have been experiencing.

Traditionally, women have been assigned to women's and family page positions with newspapers. Since this has been the pattern on many papers (with some notable exceptions, of course) a study was devised to see what women's page editors are thinking about in the areas of equal rights, discrimination, and the role of women in journalism. With such a study, perhaps the women and men involved in print journalism can re-evaluate their roles and responsibilities--and can, perhaps, improve the physical and psychological environments in which they find themselves.

II. METHOD

In November, 1973, 936 questionnaires were mailed to women's page editors across the country. The random sample represented 31 per cent of the total list of 2,934 daily and weekly editors on the Penney-Missouri Newspaper Awards program mailing list. A total of 340 questionnaires was returned, of which 335 were usable. Participants included 305 women and 30 men. While all questionnaires were sent to the women's page editors, it is believed that some of the respondents served in other capacities as well.

The questionnaire was divided into two parts. The first part was composed of several demographic items to help determine physical characteristics: salary, frequency of publication, circulation, number of male reporters working for the women's page editor, number of female reporters working for the women's page editor, number of male and female editors working for the women's page editor, education, college major and minors, years in journalism, years in present position and marital status.

The second part of the questionnaire consisted of 25 attitudinal statements designed to measure respondent's perception in the areas of qualification for journalistic work, chances of advancement for women in journalism, discrimination within the field, and the role of women in journalism. These statements were originally drawn from "The Status of Women in Journalism as Perceived by Women Members of AEJ," and revised after a series of interviews with women's page editors who participated in the Penney-Missouri Workshop in 1972.

III. RESULTS

1. Women's Editors' Environments

In order to add a further dimension to the data already reported, the environments of the respondents will be described. A relatively thorough examination of the results of this data will follow in table form. However, some of the apparent differences will be mentioned here.

Salary

Of the 335 respondents to the study, 202 (60.3%) earned $9,000 or less per year. Of these, forty-six (13.7%) earned less than $5,000, and 93 (27.8%) earned between $5,000-$7,000.

In the higher wage brackets, only 5 (1.5%) earned $25,000 or more each year; 12 (3.6%) earned more than $20,000; and a total of 52 (19.6%) earned more than $13,000 (including those previously mentioned in higher wage brackets.)

Considering weekly editors (N=94), 53 (56.4%) earn $7,000 or less per year while a total of 76 (80.9%) are earning $11,000 or less each year. Five (6.4%) earn $17,000 or more, and three (3.2%) earn more than $25,000.

Daily editors reported (based on 240 responses) 135(56.2%) in the $9,000 or less category. Twenty-six (10.8%) make less than $5,000 annually, while 59 (24.6%) make between $5,000-$7,000. The daily women's editors also report 35 (14.6%) earning between $9-11,000 and 32 (13.3%) making $11-13,000. Cumulative, 84.2% are making $13,000 or less per year. Only two (.8%) make more than $25,000.

Examining the 305 women isolated from the 30 male respondents in the study, it can be seen that 46 (15.1%) make less than $5,000; 92 (30.2%) earn between $5-7,000; and 61 (20%) report an income of between $7-9,000. The total women's page editors (women only) earning $9,000 or less is 199 of 305 (65.2%). The highest income reported among the women was in the $20-25,000 category, with six (2%) earning this amount; five (1.6%) make between $17-20,000; and eight (2.6%) are in the $15-17,000 range.

Isolating the 30 men's salaries, none made less than $5,000. Only two (6.7%) made between $7-9,000; one (3.3%) makes between $5-7,000; four (13.3%) earn between $9-11,000; and five (16.7%) make more than $25,000. Ten of the 30 men (33.3%) are paid between $17-25,000 annually.

The chi square test of significance was applied to several categories involving salary, with the following results:

--Men's salaries were significantly greater than women's (P .001).

--Controlling "formal educational level," men's salaries were significantly higher than women's (P .001).

--Controlling "professional experience" (years in journalism profession), men's salaries were significantly higher than women's in the categories 6-15 years and over 21 years (P .001); in the categories of 1-5 and 16-20 years, this comparison was not significant.

--Weeklies paid less salary than did dailies (P .01).

--The higher the circulation, the better the salary in general (P .001).

--Having a journalism major or minor did not have significance with regard to salary (P .01).

--Higher salaries were paid those with more professional experience (P .05).

Male Reporters, Female Reporters

This category was added to determine the type of reporters supervised by the women's page editor. Under all editors in the study, 53 reporters were male and 202 were female. Weekly papers' editors reported 29 male reporters--65 of the

weeklies have no male reporters. The weeklies also employ 42 female reporters--with 52 of them not reporting any women in that capacity.

The daily papers have 24 male reporters working for a women's page editor. Of the 240 dailies included in the study, 216 (90%) had no male in this capacity. There was a total of 160 female reporters working under the supervision of a women's page editor. One paper reported 21 such reporters; several dailies had women's staffs of more than three reporters. Eighty papers (33.3%) had no female reporters in this role.

Male and Female Editors

We were also interested in seeing the extent to which women's page editors, like other editors in various news capacities, supervise other editors.

Of all the weeklies and dailies, 61 of 335 reported that their women's page editors had at least one editor responsible to them. Of these, 27 were male and 34 were female.

Weekly women's page editors had 14 male editors serving under them, while only 10 female editors served under the women's page editor. Eighty of the 94 weeklies reported having no male editors in this position while 84 of the weeklies had no female editors responsible to a women's page editor.

Education

Women's page editors seem to be well educated. Eighty-two percent of the 335 subjects have had some college or graduate school. Editors with some college--243; editors with some graduate school--31. Only 58 respondents reported having some high school, while three had not completed any schooling beyond grade school.

The weekly editors report the following: 12 (12.8%) had some high school; 72 (76.6%) had some college; 10 (10.6%) had some graduate school. Of the daily editors of the women's page, three (1.2%) had grade school only; 45 (18.8%) had some high school; 171 (71.2%) had some college; and 21 (8.7%) had some graduate school.

The three with only grade-school education were female. The education of other female editors was reported as: 56 (18.4%) high school; 223 (73.1%) college; 23 (7.5%) graduate school. The 30 males in the study had the following education: two (6.7%) had some high school; 20 (66.7%) had some college; and 8 (26.7%) had some graduate school. The major difference in education between men and women seems to be that a significantly higher proportion of men had some college or graduate school than did women.

Journalism/Non-Journalism College Major or Minor

For all respondents in the study, 147 (44% of 335) had either a major or minor in journalism in college or graduate school.

Weekly women's page editors numbered 36 (38.3%) having a journalism major or minor, while 111 (46.3%) of the daily editors had either a journalism major or minor in college or graduate school. Of the 305 women in the study, 131 (42.9%) had a journalism major or minor in college or graduate school; of the 30 male editors, 16 (53%) had corresponding academic experience.

The chi square test revealed no significant difference between journalism and non-journalism majors and minors with regard to salary, nor did the test yield differences when comparing the journalism/non-journalism majors and minors with either dailies/weeklies or with the categories of circulation.

Years in Journalism

Respondents to the survey included women's editors with experience in journalism ranging from one to 56 years. One hundred seventy-three respondents (51.6%) have 10 years or less experience in journalism while 103 (31%) have five years or less experience. Only 22 (6.6%) have one year's journalistic experience.

The mean number of years' experience in journalism is 12.5 for all women's editors.

Of the 335 subjects, 72 (21.5%) have more than 20 years' experience in journalism. Editors in the weekly category average 11.3 years in journalism; nine (9.6%) have one year's experience; 52 (55.9%) have 10 or over years. Daily

women's page editors average 13.1 years in the profession. One hundred twenty (50.0%) have 10 or fewer years' journalistic experience.

The men in the study (N=30) average 16.6 years in journalism; 15 (50%) have between three and 10 years' experience while 10 (33.3%) have more than 20 years in journalism. Women have an average of 12.1 years in journalism, with 152 (50.3%) having nine years or less.

Years in Women's Editors' Role

All respondents average 6.7 years in the present position. Eighty-seven (26%) are in their first year as editor; 185 (55.4%) are within their first four years; and 67 (20%) have 10 or more years as women's page editor.

Weekly editors report an average of 6.1 years in their present positions. One hundred thirty (54.2%) are in their first four years. Men average 7.1 years in their current positions, while 15 (50%) have more than 5 years as editors. Women editors average 6.6 years, with 150 (49.3%) in their first three years. Seventy-nine (25.9%) are in their first year as women's page editors.

Marital Status

Of the 335 respondents, 239 (71%) are married, 70 (21%) are widowed or single, and 26 (8%) are divorced.

The 94 weekly women's page editors show about the same marital status: 69 (73.4%) are married, 17 (18.1%) are single or widowed, and 8 (8.5%) are divorced. The daily editors: 169 (70.4%) married, 53 (22.1%) are single or widowed, and 18 (7.5%) are divorced.

The men (N=30) show a much higher percentage of being married than the women. Of the men, 28 (93.3%) are married, 1 (3.3%) is single, and 1 (3.3%) is divorced. Of the women in the study (N=305), 211 (69.2%) are married; 69 (22.6%) are single or widowed; and 25 (8.2%) are divorced. As mentioned previously, there is a significant difference between marital status of women and their educational experience in journalism. Those women without majors or minors in journalism are more likely to be married than those women who have college journalism majors or minors.

Women's Editors' Perceptions

Women's page editors generally agree that qualifications for a job should be the only consideration in employment (6.5 on a 7-point scale). They are enthusiastic about their work (6.2), and they don't believe in hiring unqualified men or women--especially an unqualified woman--just because there are no women on the staff of the paper (6.1).

The greatest negative response was tabulated with regard to women's page editors being lucky to have jobs at all, especially since they often are hired on a part-time basis and because they often are married and eager to work in the field (2.2). Similarly, the editors disagree with the statement that they are the token women on the staff, but they are employed, and that is what really matters (2.8).

Some other general positive responses were to the statements that women's chances of getting good jobs are improving (5.8), that improvements are coming, and women would be foolish to put up with tokenism (5.6); that women are victims of their own lack of mobility (5.4); that women entering journalism can expect to be offered less money than men coming into the profession (5.2); and that unqualified women can hurt the chances of other women applicants (5.1).

Generally, the women's page editors do not agree that not much can be done about the prejudice against them in journalism (2.6). They also disagree that they do not promote hiring of other women because they like men (3.3).

Comparison of Women/Men

While the number of men studied was considerably smaller than the number of women (30 as compared with 305), some interesting differences surfaced which are worth examining.

Men do not agree that unqualified women hurt the chances of the next woman (3.5), but women agree on this item (5.3). Men also disagree that women have been discriminated against for many years (3.6) while women agree with that point (4.5).

Women are somewhat more enthusiastic about their work and agree that a "thick hide" is helpful in the profession (6.3), whereas men respond less positively (5.6).

Men do not agree that women staff members have been assigned only the traditional women's page stories (3.3) but the women agree somewhat with the same idea (4.6). Men disagree (3.1) that most of their colleagues can be described as "chauvinists" and that this situation is sometimes amusing but sometimes maddening. Women, however, agree slightly (4.0). Likewise, men disagree that women are going to have to force the issues or put up with tokenism and lip service without any real improvements in their work (3.4). The women agree that they must face up to the issue (4.3).

Interestingly, and somewhat in contrast to some of the previous responses, the women agree (5.0) that they are journalists, but women, too. They liked the reverse discrimination of having typewriters moved, doors opened, not going dutch for lunch, and having language toned down in their presence. The men did not agree with the same item (3.6)--however, they perhaps were also reacting to the wording of the question, that is "I'm a journalist but a woman, too..."

IV. CONCLUSION

The role perceptions and environments of women's page editors from daily and weekly newspapers all across the United States have been the focal points of this study. In the role perception areas, equal rights, discrimination, and the role of women in journalism were examined. Salaries, education, college major and minor, and years in the profession were some of the demographic categories studied.

Of the women's page editors studied, 305 were women and 30 were men. The women's salaries were significantly less than the men's, although some of the men may have been editors or publishers of small weeklies. Sixty-five per cent of the women earn $9,000 or less per year. Only 19 women, or six per cent earn more than $15,000 each year.

Eighty-two per cent of all respondents had some college or graduate school education. Forty-four per cent of those editors who had attended college or graduate school took a journalism major or minor. More than 50 per cent of the

respondents had 10 years or less journalism experience, but the overall mean was 12.5 years.

Concerning psychographic items, the women's page editors agree strongly that qualifications for a job should be the only consideration in employment. For the most part, the chances for other women getting journalistic jobs are improving.

The editors generally seem to disagree with traditional arguments for the hiring (or non-hiring) of women journalists. They do not feel that they are currently the "token" women on the staffs, nor do they appreciate the rather male chauvinistic attitude that women are lucky to have jobs at all--even if that job is part-time due to household responsibilities or lower pay.

The prejudice against women on newspapers can be erased with some effort on the part of women's page editors, they feel.

NOTES

1. For reading relating to this issue, see Pres.'s Comm. on Status of Women, Simone deBeavoir, The Second Sex, C. Wright Mills, Power and People.

2. J. Stanley Pottinger, "The Drive Toward Equality," Change, (October, 1972), 24.

3. Federal Communications Commission, Report and Order, Docket No. 19269 RM-1722. Released December 28, 1971.

4. Wilma Crumley and Joye Patterson, "The Status of Women in Journalism Education As Perceived by Women Members of AEJ," Paper presented to the Association for Education in Journalism, (August 20, 1973), Fort Collins, Colorado.